GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5138
ANSWERED ON:27.08.2001
WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE TO OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGY
PRABHUNATH SINGH

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether C-DOT had acquired a technology spending Rs.3.71 crore which had become obsolete even before it was adopted for implementation as appeared in the Hindustan Times of September 6, 2000;

(b) if so, whether the Government have inquired into the matter and taken any action against the authorities responsible for squandering public money; and

(c) the other points brought out in the news item and action taken on them as well?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR)

(a) to (c): Sir, the news item of the Hindustan Times dated 6th September 2000 referred to in part (a) of the question relates to Satellite Based Rural Telegraph Network (SBRTN) technology. C-DOT did not acquire this technology. The SBRTN equipment was designed and developed indigenously by erstwhile Telecom Research Centre (TRC) and Space Application Centre (SAC) between 1986-89 and productionized by the Indian Telephone Industry (ITI).TRC merged with C-DOT in 1989.

The project was for the development of a product for a specific service, namely Rural Telegraphy via satellite. The system was designed, developed, tested, its components procured and production cleared by 1989. It was not possible to enhance its scope to incorporate voice as preferred by the user later, as it would have meant a completely new design in terms of time and money. The product developed was not obsolete, as it was custom designed for the purpose for which it was mooted. The original objective was achieved. The procurement and proposed installation of the 50 terminals was only the pilot phase of the project as in the complete project there was a provision of 1000 terminals to be deployed at a later stage. In this sense, the project remained only at a developmental stage and did not enter the commercial or large scale deployment.

Therefore, it cannot be concluded that C-DOT developed a technology, which was obsolete even before deployment in the network and incurred wasteful expenditure on obsolete technology. It was a development project and the product was designed for a specific purpose. It is but natural that in the field of Research & Development, all development products do not necessarily culminate in large-scale commercial deployment. In view of these, the question of taking action against any authority does not arise.